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DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: AS TROOPS GO AFTER PKK, TURKEY LOOKS TO INCREASE
ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAQ

Classified By: PolCouns Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: GOT officials are considering ways to increase engagement and cooperation with Iraqi counterparts, even as Turkish troops move across the Iraqi border to root out the PKK presence from areas through which they routinely access Turkish territory. Murat Ozcelik, the GOT's new Acting Coordinator for Iraq, is cognizant of the challenge he faces. He hopes to travel to Baghdad early in the week of February 25 to convey a letter of invitation from President Gul to President Talabani to visit Ankara on March 5. While in Baghdad, Ozcelik will seek to engage with FM Zebari and hopes also to meet with Amb. Crocker to share views on moving forward Turkish efforts to engage politically with the GOI and, perhaps, the KRG. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) GOT Acting Coordinator for Iraq Murat Ozcelik told us February 22 that Turkey's National Security Council (NSC) had endorsed during its February 21 meeting his suggestion that the GOT increase its efforts to engage the GOI. The first step is the issuance of a long-awaited invitation to President Talabani to visit Ankara. Ozcelik confirmed press reports that President Gul reiterated a standing invitation to Talabani to visit Turkey during the presidents' February 21 telephone conversation. Gul had called Talabani to inform him of Turkey's intent to send troops over the TU-IZ border to remove PKK terrorists from an area commonly used by the PKK to enter Turkey. Gul is sending Ozcelik to Baghdad early in the week of February 25 to convey a written invitation to Talabani to visit Ankara on March 5. Ozcelik will also seek to meet with FM Zebari and expressed strong interest in meeting Amb. Crocker to discuss his thoughts on increasing political dialogue between Turkey and Iraq.

¶3. (S) In addition to increasing Turkish business contacts with Iraqi counterparts through delegation visits and to move forward quickly with GOT plans to open a new consulate in Basra, Ozcelik acknowledged the need to engage with Kurdish Regional Government officials, specifically Nechirvan Barzani. He admitted that many GOT officials have an unhealthy obsession with what Massoud Barzani says, or doesn't say, with regard to PKK terrorism. He characterized

it as an unfortunate reality. The only way Ozcelik sees to make progress is to engage directly with Nechirvan Barzani. Emphasizing that he does not yet have authorization to pursue such talks, Ozcelik said his intent is to create a relationship of trust that can help convince Nechirvan of the GOT's long-term commitment to Iraq's stability and the establishment of a healthy, mutually beneficial relationship between Turkey and the KRG. Once these benefits become more evident, he hopes that Massoud Barzani will eventually see that his self-interest lies in siding more strongly with Turkey in the struggle against PKK terrorism.

14. (C) We pointed to FM Zebari's invitation to FM Babacan to resume discussions on the closure of Makhmour refugee camp as a starting point to demonstrating Turkey's commitment to transform its relationship with Iraq. Ozcelik noted MFA's Security Affairs has the lead on that issue but he would weigh in on the issue.

15. (S) COMMENT: Ozcelik has long been far out in front of most of his GOT colleagues on Iraq. He does appear to have a relationship of trust with President Gul, was specifically asked to present at the February 21 NSC meeting, and has been entrusted with the Special Representative role during what will be at least a three-month interregnum. He knows this may be his one shot to put Turkey-Iraq relations on a fundamentally more sound footing.

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